

FALKIRK COUNCIL

**Subject: SCRUTINY PANEL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:
FALKIRK CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAUX**
Meeting: SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Date: 10 OCTOBER 2013
Author: DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In June 2013, Council agreed that the pilot Scrutiny Panel would be established and in the first instance would examine the role of CABs within the Council area. This report provides Members with information regarding the scrutiny process. The evidence provided at each of the scheduled meetings and the resultant conclusion and recommendations are provided within the appended report.
- 1.2 Public scrutiny can be defined as the activity by one elected or appointed body, examining and monitoring all or part of the activity of a public sector body with the aim of improving the quality of public services. In this case, the Panel examined the role of Citizens Advice Bureaux, as a commissioned provider of advice in the Falkirk Council area.
- 1.3 The Panel, chaired by Provost Pat Reid and with other Members being Cllr J McLuckie and Cllr J Paterson agreed the scope of the scrutiny exercise, which was defined as: ***'How well do Citizens Advice Bureaux work together in order to deliver consistent services across the Falkirk Council area?'***

2. SCRUTINY PROCESS

- 2.1 The Scrutiny process comprised of a series of meetings which were planned to allow Members to gather evidence through presentations and discussion with a range of Stakeholders.
- 2.2 To plan the process, Members of the Panel met to agree a scoping document, programme of work and meetings required to allow an effective scrutiny process to be undertaken. The schedule was as follows:

	Purpose of Meeting	Date	Additional Participants	Meeting Format
1	Scoping Establish and agree the detailed scope of the scrutiny	23 July 2013		Private
2	Scrutiny Committee	8 August 2013	Members	Public

	<i>Report scope of panel to committee</i>			
3	Background and Context i.Citizens Advice Scotland provided a brief overview of the Citizens Advice Service in Scotland and the range of services currently provided via CABs. ii.The monitoring officer provided a brief overview of local CAB structure, funding, fit with local strategy and priorities.	23 August 2013	Citizens Advice Scotland	Public
4	CABx Presentation Presentation from CABx regarding service provided and effective collaboration. Opportunity for Members to discuss presentation.	30 August 2013	CABx representatives Chairs of CABs and managers	Public
5	Partner Agency Input Opportunity for partner agencies to present and discuss joint working which has taken place with the CABx and any future plans for collaboration.	6 September 2013	Women's Aid Community Advice Service Signpost	Public
6	Conclusion Final meeting for Members to discuss and determine recommendations based on previous sessions and the evidence provided.	13 September 2013		Private
7	Scrutiny Committee <i>Present findings and recommendations of Scrutiny Panel to Elected Members</i>	10 October 2013	Members	Public

- 2.3 During the initial scoping meeting, Members agreed a range of questions to support the examination of evidence provided in written format, during and after the meetings of the Panel. The questions were:

Citizens Advice Bureaux
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What areas are covered by each bureau 2. What services are delivered to whom, where and when (including hours of operation)? 3. Are there gaps in current service provision? 4. How do we make sure that the whole area is covered given welfare reform and increasing levels of debt? 5. How do we identify new/hard to reach customers and areas of need? 6. Boundaries of CAB – What are the rules and regulations on this? How do boundaries restrict joint working? 7. What is the role and responsibility of the Management Committee? 8. What is the role and responsibility of paid staff and volunteers? 9. What are the main barriers to service provision? 10. What are the main opportunities for CABx service? 11. Funding profile for each CAB: What resources are provided by Falkirk Council? What additional resources do CABx have? 12. How to CABx ensure that staff and volunteers are up-skilled and able to cope with emerging need? 13. What do CABx do well and what areas could be improved?

Citizens Advice Scotland
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. General background to CAB. 2. What is the role of CAS – nationally and locally? 3. What core services do CAB deliver? 4. What standards are applied to CAB? 5. What monitoring, regulation and audit does CAS apply to CAB. 6. Common issues that CAS find with CAB? 7. Examples of good practice in Scotland. 8. What are the key strengths and challenges do CAS see locally – now and in the future? 9. What do CAS see as areas for improvement or change over the coming years? 10. What do local CABx do well and what could be improved?
Partner Agencies
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What do they see the role of the CABx being? 2. What is their relationship with the CABx and examples of joint working? 3. What do they see CABx doing well and what can be improved? 4. What future joint working opportunities do they see? 5. How do you think your relationship with CABx can improve? 6. Things CABx could change? 7. Significant challenges now and future?

2.4 Panel Members were provided with an information pack containing a range of background information, including:

- Towards a Fairer Falkirk Strategy
- Citizens Advice Bureaux Monitoring Statements to 31st May 2013
- Joint Working Agreement
- Annual Reports (2010/11 and 2011/12)
- Budget information
- Following the Public Pound report
- Joint Action Group: Area Business Plan
- Individual CAB Development Plans
- Fraser of Allander Institute report ‘The financial benefits of advice provision – the example of the Citizens Advice Services in Scotland’
- Maps showing areas covered by each office.

3. CONCLUSIONS

3.1 The process of scrutiny undertaken, was in line with procedural guidelines and allowed a full and transparent analysis of the scope set by the Scrutiny Panel, which was ***‘How well do Citizens Advice Bureaux work together in order to deliver consistent services across the Falkirk Council area?’***.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Members note the process undertaken and consider the evidence and recommendations in the appended report from the Scrutiny Panel; and

- 4.2 **Agree that the report should be provided to the Citizens Advice Bureaux to allow them to comment on the recommendations and that the report along with any comments from the Citizens Advice Bureaux should be submitted to the Executive.**

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DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

Date: 24 September 2013

Ref:

Contact Name: Fiona Campbell

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Any person wishing to inspect the background papers listed above should telephone Falkirk 01324 506004 and ask for Fiona Campbell.